

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 240 132

TM 832 012

TITLE How To Get the Most from a WASC Accreditation Investment.

INSTITUTION Association of California School Administrators.

PUB DATE May 83

NOTE 6p.; In its: ACSA Research, Evaluation and Accreditation Committee. Report, May 1983, pD.1-3.

AVAILABLE FROM ACSA's Foundation for Educational Administration, 1575 Old Bayshore Highway, Burlingame, CA 94010.

PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.

DESCRIPTORS *Accreditation (Institutions); Accrediting Agencies; Committees; Educational Cooperation; Educational Improvement; Elementary Secondary Education; Evaluation Methods; Guidelines; *Institutional Evaluation; School Role; School Visitation; *Self Evaluation (Groups)

IDENTIFIERS PF Project; *Western Association of Schools and Colleges

ABSTRACT

The accreditation process of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) is described along with recommendations to help schools make the most of the process. Following a brief description of the purpose and composition of WASC, the four steps of the accreditation process are listed: (1) the use of a school self-evaluation instrument; (2) a visit by a committee of three to seven members; (3) a report from the visitation committee noting areas of strengths and weaknesses; and (4) a review of the report by the WASC Accrediting Commission to determine the term of accreditation. Recommendations developed by the Research, Evaluation, and Accreditation Committee of the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) are offered to help schools fully utilize the accreditation process. The recommendations are divided into three areas: the self-study, the visiting committee, and the follow-up. (DC)

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HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM A WASC ACCREDITATION INVESTMENT

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PROPOSED MAP

HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM A WASC ACCREDITATION INVESTMENT

The Western Association of Schools and Colleges is one of six regional accrediting associations serving the schools of the United States. This Association is composed of three Commissions recognized by the U.S. Department of Education: (1) Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities; (2) Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges; (3) Accrediting Commission for Schools. It is the latter commission that accredits the public and private schools of California, Hawaii, the Pacific and American Schools in Asia.

The chief function and purpose of the Accrediting Commission is to foster excellence in elementary and secondary schools through a process of continuous self-study and evaluation.

The WASC accreditation process includes:

1. Using a school self-evaluation instrument as developed by WASC.
2. A visitation committee of from 3 to 7 members spending 3½ days visiting the school.
3. At the conclusion of the visitation, a report by the visiting committee given to the school noting areas of strengths and also areas where, in the committee's judgment, improvement is needed.
4. The visitation committee report review by the Accrediting Commission for schools with the responsibility to determine the term of accreditation.

In order to fully utilize the school accreditation process, the Research, Evaluation, and Accreditation Committee of ACSA makes the following recommendations:

A. The self-study:

1. Follow closely the suggested WASC procedures for the self-study, particularly the advice to begin the procedure approximately one year prior to the visiting committee visitation. This will allow a thorough self-study with a minimum of pressure and discourage any last minute activity.
2. Spend time with orientation of the school staff at the beginning of the self-study. Stress how the process will benefit students, teachers, classified staff, and the school. This will help insure participants who feel self-study and accreditation is of real value.

3. Involve the total staff and community representatives in the self-study. Involvement will increase interest and a desire to get the most from the process.
4. Involve the district administration and governing board members in the self-study. This not only will provide more input, but will create a better climate for implementation of recommendations for improvement from the visiting committee.
5. Have the staff give considerable thought and discussion to the formulating and prioritizing of recommendations for improvement. This will help the visiting committee to better fulfill its consultant role of reacting to well thought out staff recommendations, in addition to its own unique recommendations.

B. The visiting committee:

1. Look at the visiting committee as consultants rather than inspectors.
2. Be receptive to the comprehensive review developed by the committee members with varied backgrounds and experiences.
3. Insist on adequate time for the meeting of the visiting committee and the school steering committee to discuss the tentative visiting committee reports. Two way communication is crucial to assure that the recommendations are valid and understood.

C. The follow-up:

1. Immediately following the receipt of the visiting committee's recommendations, establish a follow-up committee to plan short and long-range strategies to implement the recommendations. This early start will take advantage of the current interest of all involved, and should result in a good base for a meaningful implementation of recommendations. This also shows the staff that something will be done as a result of all their efforts in the self-study and accreditation process.
2. Include representation from the district administration and governing board on the follow-up committee. This should better facilitate the implementation of recommendations.
3. Assign each recommendation to one person on the follow-up committee to monitor progress toward fulfillment. This person's responsibility and interest will help insure continuity of efforts.

4. Have regular meetings of the follow-up committee with assigned times for progress reports. This will also help with continuity and consistency of follow-up.
5. Report regularly to the district administration, community, and governing board on progress toward implementation of recommendations. Keeping the needs before those who can most often provide implementation will bear results.

The school staff, students, and community have invested a lot of time and effort in the self-study and accreditation process. Get the most interest from the investment by working toward the implementation of the recommendations. A forgotten, or neglected recommendation earns no interest in your investment. It is a sad waste of time, effort, and money.

RESEARCH, EVALUATION, AND ACCREDITATION
COMMITTEE

May 1983

TO: ACSA Representative Assembly

The Research, Evaluation, and Accreditation Committee has completed a number of studies this year. Documents representing the finished products of each of the subcommittees, as listed with their chairpersons, are included for your duplication and use. The subcommittee reports contained herein have been reviewed, edited, and approved by the full state committee.

Evaluation: Bob Coombs

"Microcomputer Selection Guidelines for Administrators"
"Microcomputer Network System"
"The Bilingual Education Improvement and Reform Act--
A Follow-Up"

Accreditation: Monroe Lair

"How to Get the Most from a WASC Accreditation
Investment"
"Procedures for WASC Commission Member Nomination"

Testing: Earl Owens

"State Testing: California Assessment Program"
"A Misuse of California Assessment Program Results:
Administrator Evaluation"
"Principal's Checklist on Interpretation of
California Assessment Program (CAP) Test Results"

Research: Joe Mrskos

"ACSA Endorsement of Research Studies"
"Academic Decathlon"
"An Evaluation by California School Districts
of the Third Annual Administration of the
California Basic Data System (CBEDS)"

The committee has also accomplished additional activities such as meetings with State Department of Education personnel, assistance in research, developing region committees, WASC commission nominations, and review of evaluation issues and pertinent legislation. Through the subcommittee structure, committee members have been most productive in their contributions to the association.

Caroline DeOlden, Chairperson
ACSA State Committee
Research, Evaluation, and Accreditation